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Uzbekistan, Republic of

Biotechnology

Annual

2005

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Report Highlights:

Uzbekistan has no regulations governing the production, importation or labeling of bio-engineered products. A draft law is currently under discussion, although implementation is not expected in the near future.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
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Executive Summary

Uzbek does not commercially grow any bio-engineered crops nor does it have any regulations in place affecting imports of these products. There are no regulations concerning labeling of processed food products.

U.S. Trade

U.S. agricultural trade to Uzbekistan is hampered by Uzbekistan's complex trade regime based on an import-substitution policy and aided by high tariffs. Although U.S. agricultural exports have averaged \$24.7 million over the past three calendar years (2002-2004), most was comprised of food assistance in oilseeds, rice and wheat. Uzbekistan's major imported commodities include: sugar, butter and some consumer foods.

Biotechnology Trade and Production

- Uzbekistan does not commercially produce any biotechnology crops;
- The Uzbek Institute of Genetics and Plant Experimental Biology is doing some research on biotechnology crops. However, there are no published results from this research and no immediate plans that any bio-engineered crops will be produced commercially in Uzbekistan in the foreseeable future.
- Up until FY 2005 Uzbekistan had been a food aid recipient. No problems existed for imported GMO soybeans or soybean oil to the country.

Regulations

Currently, Uzbekistan has no laws or regulations governing the approval, production, importation or labeling of bio-engineered agricultural products, including processed foods, animal feed or seed. According to the Agency for Foreign Economic Relations (AFER) and the State Committee for Protection of nature (the main governmental organizations responsible for biotech issues), a draft Government decree dealing with the production and import/export of genetically modified agricultural products is under development. The government has tasked the Institute of Genetics and Plant Experimental Biology to develop documents on the use and safety of biotech products. However, the government has not approved the draft decree because it is still under preliminary consideration by a number of different ministries. Based on observations of official and independent experts, the government is not expected to approve the decree in the near future. The draft is not expected to be very restrictive as is the case in the European Union. Instead, Uzbekistan is modeling its law on the existing biotechnology laws of CIS and Baltic countries.

Although Uzbekistan participates in the Convention on Biological Diversity, it is not a signatory to the Cartagena Protocol.

Uzbekistan has no uniform system of labeling including biotechnology. However, In accordance with Uzbek legislation on protection of consumer's rights, all products sold in the country must contain the following information in local (Uzbek) language:

- Name of the product;
- Manufacturer's name and contact information;
- Ingredients and 'best before' date (if applicable);
- User's manual (if needed); and cautions (if any).

In 1999-2000 USDA's Cochran Fellowship Program organized two training courses related to biotechnology for the local experts from the related ministries. In addition, the United Nation's Office for Environmental Protection issued grants to some Central Asian republics for

Biotechnology-related projects. Reportedly, only Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan did not get these grants, because the Governments of these countries didn't apply for it.

Testing

Uzbekistan has no testing facilities for bio-engineered products. According to the Institute of Genetics, which is working on the draft legislation, a request for funding purchases of testing equipment has been submitted to the government.

Public Perception

There is very little information on biotechnology published in Uzbek newspapers. Over the past 10 years, only a handful of articles have been published in the popular press. In general, the media does not cover this issue. As a result, there public is generally has no strong feelings one way or the other about the issue.